STUDY TEAM MEETS WITH MTQ OFFICIALS

A meeting was held on March 25, 2002 at the Quebec Ministry of Transport (MTQ) in the City of Quebec to introduce the Boston to Montreal High Speed Feasibility and Planning Study (HSR Study). Scott Bascom, Multimodal Planning Coordinator for the Vermont Agency of Transportation, and Ron O'Blenis, project manager for Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas lead consultant for the study, met with Andre Meloche, Chantal Girouard and Marc-Andre Thivierge of the MTQ to review the development and scope of the HSR Study, and to identify opportunities for participation by the Quebec Ministry of Transport.

Scott Bascom presented an overview of the status of the Study. In October 2000, the Federal Rail Administration (FRA) notified the three partnership states of Vermont, New Hampshire and Massachusetts that the Boston to Montreal corridor had been designated as a potential high-speed corridor. The designation included specific requirements that the partnership states must consider during the HSR Study. Two items noted were: identification and evaluation of institutional issues including clearance of customs, and the requirement to solicit support and participation from Canadian governmental agencies. The representatives from the MTQ agreed that, as the initiative for the study has been progressed by the FRA, it will be viewed by Canadian interests positively which will make it easier to obtain appropriate Canadian support and participation.

Mr. Meloche provided an overview of recent studies by Canada of HSR service opportunities. In 1996, a study was performed of HSR from Montreal to New York and Boston. Additionally, a study was completed in 1995 of HSR service options for the Quebec-Montreal-Windsor rail corridor. As HSR service improvements can be made in phases on existing right-of-way, it appears that HSR service in the Quebec-Montreal-Windsor rail corridor may be implemented on existing rail lines.

It was noted that VIA Rail is the Canadian authority for operation of intercity passenger service. Integration of the HSR rail service with existing VIA rail and other service such as the Amtrak New York to Montreal service would be a positive opportunity for passengers to access far greater regions that just the area between Boston and Montreal.

The public participation effort of the HSR study was discussed. It was noted that the intent of this effort is to inform the public of the long-range transportation activity. It was agreed that when the public meetings in the three partnership states are held near the end of Phase I to present the draft report of the study, a similar public meeting would be held within the Province of Quebec. MTQ will host the meeting with participation from the HSR Study Team.

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By: Ron O'Blenis

The above represents the events to the best of the author's recollection. If any attendee has a different understanding, please contact the author so comments can be incorporated.

Copies to:
Attendees